

Tourism and the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument

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When, as a teenager, my husband spent his summers herding cattle across the remote landscape of the Kaiparowits Plateau, he had no idea that the desolate area he traversed would one day become part of the 1.7-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM). Of course, President Clinton's 1996 proclamation caught most Utahns by surprise and seemed to escalate an already contentious debate over western wilderness. Now—nearly a decade later—the debate continues over how that vast and beautiful land should be used.

Here we'll focus on the monument's impact on tourism and (for now) ignore the monument's economic repercussions on cattle grazing and mining. This is no easy task. Kane and Garfield counties were both heavily dependent on tourism and recreation-related employment long before the creation of GSENM, making the impact on jobs unclear.

No Easy Answers

Tourism employment estimates from the Utah Travel Council show little change in tourism-related employment in Garfield and Kane counties since the monument's creation (some years, it's up; some years, it's down). And, just looking at employment in the lodging industry gives the same type of result. This analysis doesn't mean the monument has not created tourism jobs, it just means we can't quantify its employment impact.

Perhaps the most important impact on local employment has been in the public sector.

After all, tourism-related jobs are not known for their high wages, but federal government employment provides some of the area's highest compensation. Kane County has benefited most from the increased federal employment needed to run and maintain monument venues. Bureau of Land Management employment in Kane County has increased by roughly 20 positions since the monument's creation.

If You Build It, They Will Come

We know that people are visiting GSENM and they are spending money. In 2003, visits to the monument totaled almost 700,000—down from the peak visitation year of 1999 (1.1 million visits). Many visitors make a monument visit part of larger tour of the national parks. In addition, preliminary results from a Utah State University Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism study show that those visitors spent an estimated \$88 million—no small chunk of change. ⓘ

More?

Go to:

<http://extension.usu.edu/cooperative/iort/pResearch>

<http://travel.utah.gov/countyprofiles.html>

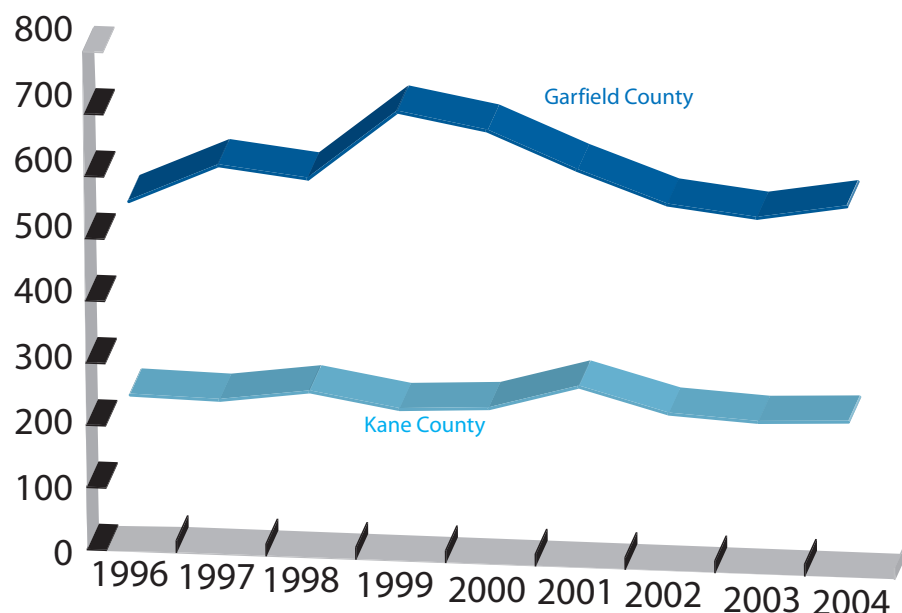
did you know?

- DHS Products, a manufacturer of abrasive manicure products, has relocated to Cedar City. The company is one of the largest producers of manicure supplies such as fingernail files and buffers. The company employs about 100 people, about 50 of whom are permanent, full-time workers. *The Spectrum*

- An order by the Utah Public Service Commission has opened the door for a Texas company to build a \$200 million natural gas-fired power plant in Mona, Juab County, possibly leading to the creation of 100 new jobs. *The Deseret News*

- A tiny oil company has snapped up leasing rights to a half-million acres in central Utah that it says could yield a billion barrels or more of oil. Geologists are calling it a spectacular find—the largest onshore discovery in at least 30 years. The find, in Sevier County, was made by Wolverine Gas & Oil Corp. *Salt Lake Tribune*

Lodging Industry Employment in Garfield and Kane Counties



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services